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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 0911  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 4447  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - ABE'S VISIT TO US - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Tuesday morning's Asahi front-paged Defense Minister Kyuma's meeting Monday morning (local time) with Defense Secretary Gates in Washington.

¶1. "Bush-Abe Meeting: Efforts Needed to Make Alliance Rock Solid" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri editorialized (4/29): "During their meeting in Washington, Prime Minister Abe and President Bush agreed to create an 'irreplaceable' US-Japan alliance. To do so, both allies must make constant efforts to further strengthen their alliance. This is the challenge made clear at the Bush-Abe meeting. Both firm will and strong cooperation by the US and Japan are necessary to press North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. But will gaps develop between the US, which is focusing on nonproliferation, and Japan, which is prioritizing the DPRK's denuclearization? Some in Japan are concerned that the US has been taking a conciliatory approach by complying with North Korean calls to release DPRK-linked funds at a Macau bank."

¶2. "Did Abe and Bush Close Gap in US-Japan Alliance?" An editorial in the business daily Nihon Keizai commented (4/29): "Although PM Abe's visit to Washington, realized seven months after his inauguration, has been criticized as 'too little, too late,' at least there was sufficient time to prepare for the visit. The US and Japan went out of their way to close their gap over policy on North Korea. It is only natural that the two allies would do so, as the party most pleased by any US-Japan discord would be Pyongyang. Nonetheless, was the warning issued by the two leaders at Camp David sufficient to draw a sincere response from Pyongyang? During their meeting, Abe presumably stated his own views on North Korea policy, and though his statement was likely laden with

diplomatic rhetoric, he must have at least indirectly expressed dissatisfaction with the policy turnaround by the Bush administration at the six-party talks in February."

DONOVAN